

January 13, 2009

House State Administration Committee
1301 E. 6th Ave, Capitol Building
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Dear Committee Members,

I am Milton Wester, Chairman of the Board of County Printing. A scheduled pre-surgery appointment prevents me from attending this hearing. Please accept my testimony in the form of this letter.

The Board of County Printing, which is comprised of five individuals appointed by the Governor of Montana, is responsible for adopting printing standards and setting maximum prices for county legal advertising (public notices). To carry out this obligation, the board consists of two individuals representing county commissioners, two individuals representing Montana newspapers, and one member of the general public.

Since counties are obligated by law to publish certain public notices (or legal advertisements), this board provides a vital service to county government, Montana newspapers, and Montana taxpayers by establishing a fair rate to charge for these notices. Public notices provide important information to Montana individuals and businesses about their government. Public notices cover many topics, including business matters, liquor licensing, public auctions and sales, estates, zoning, public meetings, bids to sell goods and services to the government, local government finances, and state and local elections. By purchasing the public notice in the form of an advertisement, the government agency can guarantee that the public will have available the complete information it needs to keep informed.

The Board of County Printing met in May, 2008. At that meeting, the board heard testimony from the Montana Newspaper Association (MNA) and the Montana Association of Counties (MACO). Following the testimony, the board agreed unanimously to establish a new set of rates for county legal advertising. Both MNA and MACO agreed with the decision.

At the May meeting, Sheryl Olson, Deputy Director of the Department of Administration, informed the board members that the Board of County Printing did not have specific rule-making authority and that the rates must be listed in the administrative rules. The lack of rule-writing authority is an oversight that needs

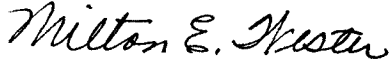
to be corrected. Since 1972, this board has posted maximum allowable legal advertising rates that newspapers may charge county government.

For this reason, the board voted to pursue legislation to give it the authority to publish the negotiated maximum rates by rule.

Therefore, speaking for the Board of County Printing, I seek your support for House Bill 67. The bill corrects the oversight by amending Section 7-5-2404, MCA "Establishment of maximum prices", paragraph 1 to read: "The board shall adopt, by rule, and publish a schedule of maximum prices to be charged for county legal advertising.

Thank you for taking my testimony into the record

Respectively,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Milton E. Wester".

Milton E. Wester
Chairman, Board of County Printing
Publisher, Laurel Outlook